

FAMILY PROMISE OF
COASTAL ALABAMA
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Family Promise of Coastal Alabama

Fall

October 31, 2011

Homeless Children and Families on the Rise...

Today, homeless children and youth are the fastest-growing population of homeless people in the United States. Of the estimated three to four million homeless people, over 40% are families.

For homeless children, school is a vital and important part of their life and provides them with a sense of security and stability. Often, the homeless child's school experiences can actually enable them to cope with their homelessness.

Homeless children experience an extreme amount of stress because they face frequent changes in schools, a lack of access to basic resources and the instability of constant moves. Their trauma may be readily perceived in a lack of motivation, low attendance, poor school performance, low self esteem, increased frequency of illness, and poor social development.

Last month, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, which organized last week's Oakland conference, released their latest snapshot of homelessness in the country. It shows that more than 650,000 individuals experienced homelessness in 2009, a three per-

cent increase from the year before, and homeless families were the fastest growing subgroup. There were 79,000 homeless families in 2009, a four percent increase from the year before.

Steve Berg, vice president for programs and policy with the National Alliance to End Homelessness, based in Washington, D.C., said young families, individuals aged between 18 and 24 years of age, and veterans with families face particular challenges.

"Young families are more vulnerable," Berg said. "They are less established in the job market, and they have young children who make it hard to maintain a job."

Women veterans, many with children, are among the growing ranks of homeless veterans, he added.

The recession, along with prolonged unemployment, is the main driver of homelessness, Berg said, but the foreclosure crisis also impacts homelessness. Families don't go from losing their home to ending up on the streets in one step, he said, but the housing crisis is dragging down the economy.



This year, over 4000 students in Mobile Public School System were identified as homeless.

Source: Mobile Co. Public Schools—www.mcps.com

"The bigger effect of the foreclosure crisis is it sets off a broader economic crisis that produces unemployment at the bottom of the job market that creates a lot of homelessness," said Berg, noting that contraction in the housing industry and construction field is causing ripple effects in other sectors of the economy.

Source: www.mcps.com and www.newamericamedia.org



Government Street Presbyterian Church has been a long-time HOST for Family Promise Guests.

Calendar ALERT!



November Notables:

* **Nov. 6—Little Flower BINGO**
Little Flower Catholic Church
Fundraiser for Family Promise
1:30pm-5:00pm \$10.00
** Bring personal hygiene and cleaning supplies and get 3 FREE cards!

* **Nov. 11—Veteran's Day**
Family Promise office closed

* **Nov. 12—Bayou Bash**
All Saints Episcopal Church
6:00pm \$30.00

* **Nov. 24—Thanksgiving**
Family Promise office closed



"We could not offer the programs we do without the help of our wonderful churches and all the volunteers!"

Becoming a HOST or Support Church ... We need YOU!

Family Promise is blessed with a solid network of churches that provide weekly overnight shelter to our families in need. Each HOST church provides space for safe temporary lodging, meals and welcoming care in the evenings for one week at a time on a quarterly basis. Holidays are shared and rotated yearly.

Members of the congregation volunteer to prepare meals, interact with families and children and donate valuable time. Support churches will take on

the duties of preparing meals, interacting with families and volunteering time in partnership with a HOST church, relieving the HOST one or more nights, from these duties. Family Promise provides transportation, Day Center, counseling, support services, mattresses/cots, and training for HOST and Support churches and volunteers.

We currently have 22 HOST and Support churches and are always in need of increasing our network. If you feel your church

may be suitable or interested in joining our Interfaith Hospitality Network, please contact Family Promise for more information or to schedule a meeting.

It is through our network that we are able to keep our costs low and continue to provide the valuable program to homeless families in our community. We greatly appreciate all those who have helped in past and continue to support us!

We could not do this without YOU!

Want to Make a Difference? Get Involved! Here's How:

Family Promise receives support from individuals, churches, groups, organizations and companies. *If you are interested in making a difference in the lives of our families, there are many ways you can help. Here is a list of some of the ways people are reaching out. If you have a creative way of helping, we would love to hear from you.*

- Donate—financial contributions can be made online as well as to Family Promise directly
- Attend or sponsor one of our fundraisers—Dancing with the Clergy—spring, Serving YOU—September, Cardboard City—October
- Host your own fundraiser—commit to raise money by holding a yard sale, car wash, bake sale, sports event or whatever your interest is. Contact Family Promise for assistance and ideas.
- Contribute to United Way at work. Designate your donation to go to Family Promise.
- Planned Giving
- Recommend Family Promise to your employer for annual community support.
- Donate used furniture or clothing to Goodwill in the name of Family Promise. We will receive the dollar value to use at a later date. This is available through their Good Samaritan Donation Program.
- Sponsor a "Supplies/Diaper Drive" or an "Undies Sunday" at your Church or at work. We are always in need of toiletries, diapers (all sizes), toilet paper, paper towels, and general cleaning supplies.
- Collect supplies and donate a "Housewarming Basket" for a family in need. We have a list of items needed available on request.
- Memorials and bequests can be made to Family Promise.
- Recycle used ink cartridges at Office Depot or Office Max under Family Promise account.
- Sell furniture at a consignment shop and donate proceeds to Family Promise.
- Help Spread the Word! Let everyone know about our program and encourage them to get involved!
- Adopt Family Promise for your company Christmas gift exchange, club, student group or school group. Contact us for a list of items needed.
- Donate new items, gift cards or services to be used at Silent Auction Spring fundraiser.
- Talk to your church about becoming a Host or Support
- VOLUNTEER!

Weather Spikes Record Requests While Funding Drops...

Over the summer, Family Promise along with other resource programs, have received a record number of requests for assistance. The high heat along with a significant increase in our area's homeless population, have tapped resources to an all time low.

Many programs have experienced

record requests and a reduction in donation and grant funding, forcing cut-backs and fewer resources.

In the month of July, Family Promise received over 900 calls for assistance.

Across the nation, individual donations and contributions have slowed. In 2009, national charitable giving was down another 3.2%

from the previous year (*The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 6/9/2010*).

The City of Mobile's annual commitment to Family Promise was cut 10% in 2009 and has remained down through 2012. "We anticipate a higher number of requests than we've seen in the past when the temperatures start getting colder" says Teresa Ramsey, Executive Director.



Notes from the Executive Director, Teresa Ramsey...

As I trudged through the woods on a crisp January night two years ago, John, my guide, warned me that we were approaching the camp site of a man that had recently passed away. John asked that I, and the others with us, wait outside the site while he entered to verify to whom the camp belonged. We watched as John opened a Bible and noted that the name on the dedication page confirmed his deceased friend's campsite. John immediately set the Bible down and asked that we leave the site out of respect. As we walked away, John explained that his friend was struck by a car while panhandling at an interstate exit. John then stated: "He died, but no one cared. No one even seemed to notice; it was like his life didn't matter. No one cared because he was homeless."

I have pondered those words spoken by John many times. It troubled me to think that this man, whose camp site we had stumbled across that night, might have died thinking that no one cared about his situation or that his life did not hold the same value as another because he was homeless.

As I walked back to the Family Promise van that night, I thought of the many people that I have encountered since serving here. Many different faces, various stories with a diversity of backgrounds - but they all held one thing in common: at the moment in time that I met them, they were in a homeless crisis and experiencing a difficult time in their life; self esteem at an all time low, stress at an all time high, embarrassed and humbled. But, I could look them in the eye, rest assured that they would find compassion, unconditional love, and hope while in our program.

In my heart, I hold hope that an act of kindness was shown to John's friend before he passed away. I hold hope that he did not leave this earth without knowing that other people in his community cared about him.

To see the numbers of those experiencing a homeless crisis today are staggering. We remain committed to the idea that the families that are placed in our path will be shown compassion and unconditional love while in our program. I know, and don't merely hold hope, that families in our Interfaith Hospitality Network know that others care about their situation. Our volunteers show acts of kindness everyday. Thank you for the sense of hope that you inspire in those who cross our path at the most difficult time in their lives. You are having more of an impact than you realize!

May God Richly Bless Each One of You ~ Teresa Ramsey



First Annual Fundraiser—SERVING YOU! Serves up success! This great fundraiser brought in a grand total of \$8093 in donations!

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard and our Celebrity Servers! A special thanks to Family Promise Board Members—Jennifer Kennedy and Nancy Hughes for organizing this first time event! Also, thank you to the Family Promise Board for coming out to each event and working so hard on behalf of the program. Family Promise is truly blessed to have such a dedicated leadership team!

FAMILY PROMISE OF COASTAL ALABAMA

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We're on the Web!
www.familypromisemobile.org

By the numbers...

Since 2003:

- * 87,360 meals served
- * 26,280 beds provided
- * 39,200 van rides
- * 1,132 volunteers
- * 1,100 people served

On Going...

- * 74 days/Average stay for a family
- * 14 HOST churches
- * 7 Support churches
- * Counseling
- * GED assistance
- * Daycare
- * Support services to include bus fare, car repair, gas, permanent housing, school supplies/uniforms, job placement, employment skills training and more!

Ongoing Need:

Personal hygiene items: toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, paper towels, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, and diapers (size 4 & 5 mainly), and copy paper.

Intern Receives Hands-On Experience with Family Promise

My experience at Family Promise has been very enlightening and eye opening. Even in the short period of time that I have been here, I have already learned so much and gained a whole new perspective of the homeless population. There is such a huge number of homeless families with children here in Mobile that most people are unaware of. And it is often the people who you would least expect. It could be the person sitting next to you in class or even your child's classmate that has been sleeping in their car. It just takes one setback like the loss of a job or the death of a family member to cause them to get behind. In my time at Family Promise I've seen how overwhelming the need is, but I've also seen how much of a difference our program can make in a family's life. ~ Jessie Wilson/ University of South Alabama - Social Work Major

HOMELESSNESS IN MOBILE AND BALDWIN COUNTIES, ALABAMA

- ◆ According to the January, 2010 Point in Time Count of the Homeless in Mobile/Baldwin County:
- ◆ ...there was a total of 883 homeless people (men, women and children). 396 of those were unsheltered; 487 were in temporary shelters.
- ◆ There have been over 14, 700 foreclosures in the state of ALABAMA this year to date. (source: Realtytrac.com)
- ◆ 1 in every 1,218 housing units received a foreclosure filing in July 2011 (source: Realtytrac.com)
- ◆ Over 4000 students in Mobile County were identified as homeless this year



Caseworker's Comments

As the cold weather and holidays approach, I am reminded of how important and essential each shelter program is to the city of Mobile. As an agency, we have experienced an increase of calls from various agencies and individuals who are in need of a place to stay or some form of support, but these calls are much different than before. There is a sense of urgency when families call: more people are staying in their car, sheds, or abandoned homes seeking shelter from the cold. We have worked hard to address the needs of each family on a case by case basis, but resources are limited. It is with great hopes that circumstances

and situations will change and the numbers will decrease. As of now we are taking a different approach with case management because community resources that we were able to utilize in the past are no longer available. We cannot band aid the current situation, but equip families with the right tools to become self sufficient and independent. We are emphasizing education, budgeting and life skills to help establish a well rounded individual in these tough economic times. Above all things we will continue to encourage, uplift and provide hope to those in needHope and Blessings to you!
~India Kidd, BSW



Homeless families, veterans and women /single mothers on the rise since 2008.